

Social Service PILOT and Comparative Impact Study Committee
Conference Room 2 7:30 PM Memorial Building Framingham, Ma

Minutes

January 3, 2006

Note: If a word or sentence is blue and underlined click for the link.

Note: A tape recording of these minutes is available upon request

Attendance: Yaakov Cohn, Dawn Harkness, Cynthia Laurora., Laurie Lee, Jim Palmer,
Wes Ritchie, Nick Sanchez: Steve Orr absent: Bob Berman

Meeting called to order by Vice Chair Cohn at 7:30 PM.

Approval of December 13 minutes was postponed.

Some corrections to the December 20 meeting were made. Ms Harkness asked for approval to be postponed.

The group discussed the upcoming working session with Advocates, SMOC and Wayside: the nature of the meeting and whether an authorized representative, who can speak for the agency, will be sent from the agencies.

Laurie said that as far as she knows we are discussing issues revolving around the survey questions and that an authorized representative will come from each agency.

The **Education** group is setting up a meeting with Keefe and the charter school to get some preliminary information.

DPW Questions:

1. What is the cost of trash service for the social service addresses enclosed and how is it based?
2. Do any of these properties pay a fee for trash service to the DPW? If so, what is the fee schedule?
3. How are these addresses billed for water and sewer?
 - a. Does the town subsidize any water and sewer costs?
 - b. Do these addresses pay commercial or residential rates? Please provide a breakdown.
4. Is there any impact on roadways due to social services?
 - a. Street or sidewalk maintenance.
 - b. Parking.
 - c. Street plowing.
 - d. Sidewalk plowing.
 - e. Parking lot plowing.
 - f. Do these addresses have an undue impact on any roadway issues?
5. Are there any impacts to DPW due to these addresses that have been mitigated or should be mitigated?
6. Please list the number of calls for service from the supplied addresses over the past ten years.
7. Does the DPW provide any services, including grounds, maintenance,

or plowing to any of the properties listed? If yes, please describe,
estimate cost and any fees collected.

8. Is there any impact to the town due to these addresses that you are aware of that we have not covered?

Discussion about these questions ensued and corrections and additions were made.

Add to the questions: and how was this determined.

Change reference to social services to be to the addresses given.

It was noted that the annual report can give information about the average costs.

Steve moved to accept the DPW questions with the changes proposed.

Second

It was confirmed that the same cover letter will go out with this.

Asking for a soft copy is in the cover letter.

The same living list of addresses will go out with it

Town Manager will get a copy

Vote: 9 in favor 0 opposed 0 abstain pass

Background update

Updates to the list were discussed. These updates are all being kept as additional addresses and will be sent out to the departments all at once.

Laurie moved that we accept these addresses into the list: 24 Union, 48 Franklin and 28 Francine

Second

Vote 8 in favor 0 opposed 0 abstain pass

Laurie brought up the issue of advocacy groups that are not explicitly providing services. The group needs to make a policy for the inclusion or exclusion of these.

Dawn said that she agreed that we needed to be consistent in our usage.

For example Nami.

The vice chair read the letter from Nami included below:

There was much discussion about this issue and the committee decided to postpone any decision regarding advocacy groups.

The working group will get some information regarding SIC codes for NAMI.

Other Working Groups

Nick Sanchez asked about benefits .

Dawn said that the benefits questions were incorporated into the survey's to the social services

There was concern that there was no independent work being done. Dawn did not think that was within the scope of the Action Plan. She said the working group is waiting for data from the departments and the agencies.

Yaakov wondered if the issue of benefits has been adequately addressed or if we have lost sight of that issue.

Dawn thought a lot of stress was put on benefits.

Dawn said she would like to discuss the **public safety** work group.

We did get some information for Chief Carl today but the fire and police department have indicated that they are not able to really give us the answers to the questionnaires in the format that we gave to them. When we gave a similar questionnaire to AMR, they gave us back exactly what we asked for: hard copy and soft copy. She said that we seem to be having more difficulty with our own departments. The safety committee was interested in having us essentially do the work for the police department and the fire department, instead of requiring them to give us the information. Dawn objected to that. She thinks we should require of them to at least do what AMR did. So she wants guidance from the entire committee: is this the direction to go in or not. Should we be doing the department's work for them or should we go back to them.

Nick thought it was an important issue raised. He recommended that the working committee address the issue with the town manager. That is what we were told by the BoS too. You have had a difficulty and the town manager can help solve this issue before any extra work is imposed upon the committee.

Steve Orr said that all of us are tax payers and we already paid to have this information done and it is already publicly available. He doesn't have a problem with us gleaning this information from public sources provided to us. That is all we are talking about doing.

Yaakov asked what has been provided.

Laurie said that what she thinks is the case is that Chief Carl has assembled a lot of information. Two large reports that the department put together on crime studies, number officers : detailed information. There is also very detailed annual reports available from 2000-2005. What Laurie understood was that he gave us this information for us to go through. HE doesn't have the personnel to answer the questions one by one, so Laurie suggested to the working group that we should divide the questions up and use the information to see what can be answered.

She gave as an example: what is the schedule of the police officers and where are they located. This is information in the annual report.

There is also a lot of crime statistics

Laurie added that after they go through the questions they will find ones they cannot answer or need clarification of, and at that point they can go back to chief Carl for more information. Perhaps bring him in to the larger committee.

The information from the Chief was regarding calls to the specific addresses.

Dawn appreciates that it may be difficult for him to find someone to do this. She also appreciates Nick's suggestion that we go to the town manager to see about having encouragement coming from that direction. When she saw the AMR response, it was...

they answered the questions exactly as we sent them. When we asked for the soft copy data, they did that. They were extremely cooperative. They aren't a town department. They are a private organization and do not get paid for what they do for us. She really doesn't want us doing the work of the police and fire department: essentially doing their legwork for them, possibly making mistakes in the analysis. If we do that for the police or fire department, what is to stop social service agencies to tell us to dig out the answers ourselves.

Dawn said that before we take on the responsibility of doing all the legwork ourselves, to ask our town departments to please ask the questions we ask of them. We are a committee created by town meeting and we have a right to have the answers to these questions. They have an obligation to provide it. They should do what they can. And leave as little of that legwork up to us as possible.

Jim said that all the information is here(pointing to reports) and he doesn't want us to interpret it. It is wrong for us to interpret it. The town manager and the selectman said they will do whatever we want to help. We need some help to give us the answers to our questions. If the town manager can't handle it the BoS are in control of the fire and police and they should insist they do this. It is not our work to go dig for this information.

Nick moved that we request that the town manager try to resolve the issue of getting information that we requested from town departments.

Second

Steve Orr told a story about a visit to the Soviet Union to illustrate a point: the committee has been given a lot of useful information and answers. It might not be in the form that we expected and we might have to do some work to assemble it, but the answers are there. He urged that we first see what we have and be sure we aren't going to the board of selectman needlessly.

Dawn said that this committee has to treat all subjects of the questionnaires fairly and the same. She did not think we should be doing legwork for some and not for all. At this point it is too early a juncture for them to be doing this. They should answer the questions in the format we have given them, just like everybody else has and will. What they can't answer fine. It is too early now. We have to treat everyone in a standard way.

Wes said that we could do the same thing with social service agencies: why send a questionnaire, why not find the answers?

Steve said that there is information that is not readily available.

Wes agreed with Dawn.

Laurie said that for the record, she has said it 100 times, she has not ever taken the stance that here is a questionnaire, answer the questions for me and that is all I will do. From day one, she has done research. The list of addresses came from many annual reports and websites from social service agencies. Hard digging. She already has other sources of police statistics, because we need numbers for the other communities. She reiterated that she is not sitting around waiting. If someone says they are not going to answer a survey, that does not mean that she is not going to go out there and get the answer.

Laurie said that she has treated everyone the same. Always.

Nick said that if we run into problems and we have to depend on legwork, then that is what we do. We are volunteers. In general he supports Dawn in that he wants us to first ask the town manager for help.

Jim thought our police chief are highly paid public servants and thought the police could find someone to pull the information out of the report and answer the questions.

The group discussed what they were voting on: to ask Mr. Purple to find some solution, or intervene for the committee, or find a designee to solve the issue of the police and fire questionnaires.

Vote: 6 in favor 1 opposed 1 abstain pass

Nick made a statement: He thinks our police chief is under paid and also all of our people in government are underpaid. He wanted that statement made.

Nick spoke to **Property & Income**

We worked many, many hours looking at addresses that are near or very close to the addresses we have. We have compiled a list of assessed values. The working committee should be able to present a comprehensive report in a week of all the findings. This will be close to a final report in terms of the factual information we have obtained. Everyone has to move on to other things.

Laurie concurred.

Nick commented and Laurie agreed that people might need more than one day to read it ahead of time and we will send it out end of week.

Details of distributing the document, the nature of it being a public document, the marking of the document to make it clear it is a draft and procedures used for the study were discussed and use of the information by the committee as a whole.

Jim was concerned that we do not have a specific methodology for determining the relationship between property values and housing values. He was also concerned about the actual values of the assessments and how they compare the the actual value of the property.

Nick responded that we are not looking at absolute values but changes in value, so that addresses the first issue.

The second point, the committee has agreed that we should look at information that has been developed by government agencies etc. such as assessed values. We are filling in questions raised by the committee. How the information is interpreted is up to the committee and there might be more than one interpretation. The work group is following the steps we were asked to follow. If you want to disagree with assessed values there is nothing we can do: they are values assessed by the town.

Dawn thought this would be good information to have and it would help us a lot. There have been some arguments that when a social service agency buys a building, values of the neighbors around it are going to decline. This will be one good base way of measuring that. (inaudible)

Nick said that the goal is to get this report out by Friday or Saturday.

By mailing list. The file is also available on Steve's website archives.

Jim asked if the P & I committee will check the work by using certified appraisals.

Laurie mentioned that they are not public documents and that the group will send out a final report on appraisers.

Dawn asked if there is information on last sale price. Laurie said that yes that information is available but they could not use sale prices for the study because the selling year was all over the place. Also, we can't use a sale price and compare it to an assessed price.

Someone from the audience asked if the assessor takes into account a social service property when making an assessment.

The group discussed the correctness of the assessed value and the full evaluations required by the State and the process which includes a time lag and State verification.

One could disagree with the assessment and file for an abatement.

One assumes that the values are correct unless they file or challenge the values. The same holds true for a social service agency.

Schedule

Thursday the 19th in the Albondi room as a working session with the SMOC, Advocates and Wayside.

Dawn discussed the video tapes and streaming video. The town cannot put the meetings on government access because of policy. The same is true for the town website i.e. streaming video. She is working on changing the policy of the BoS

Laurie explained that she checked with the D.A. and that Jim can participate in the 1/19 meeting via conference call . He just can't vote but he can be counted. She will set up a phone for him.

In addition, Laurie said that she is trying to contact every agency on the list to see if they want to come in and have a similar working session. Bethany has replied that they are interested. Tentative date 2/28

The group reviewed the meeting dates.

Nick mentioned that Chris Petrini recommended that we should have public hearings: he asked if there is any scheduling about that.

Laurie said that she looked into that too.

Dawn thought that Chris said we are not a body that holds hearings, such as legal ones, but a study group. He was talking amount working meetings not hearings. He made a point of that when Nick asked his question to Mr Petrini.

Steve agreed we do not conduct legal type hearings.

Laurie said that she wrote down specifics of what Town Counsel was referring to in his recommendations. She understood him to be saying Public Hearings , not in the legal

sense, but hearings that are open to the public, published in the newspaper and focused on public input.

Wes did not understand the point of public hearings. He didn't know why they would be useful.

Yaakov answered that we are doing our little thing in the midst of this issue , and these meetings would be a chance for agencies to come and make statements, draw involvement from the public. So we are not working in isolation.

Nick added that he thought Mr. Petrini said that the hearings would give the town a chance to have a voice.

Dawn did not remember him describing it this way. She thought all of our meetings are open.

Steve said that these would not be hearings like the conservation commission.

Yaakov thought they would be specifically for the community to have a chance to come in and be heard by the committee.

Laurie suggested the Chair read the excerpts from the recommendations from town counsel that she assembled.

Public Hearings recommended by Town Counsel:

1. The task force invited individuals from various state agencies and private non-profit organizations to share their experiences and expertise in understanding the benefits provided by local social service organizations. The PILOT Committee should provide the Town's social service organizations with a similar opportunity, like what was done in Worcester, to provide information regarding service provided to the Town and its residents by these agencies.
2. Worcester held two hearings to allow the public to air their concerns or to make statements in support on the issues raised. The PILOT Committee should consider adopting some of methods used in the Worcester study, specifically by allowing supporters of tax exempt social service organizations to provide input on the services offered by those organizations, so that a comprehensive view can be presented by the PILOT Committee to Town Meeting and the Board of Selectmen.
3. In addition the PILOT Committee should consider holding at least one additional public hearing to allow the public to comment on its draft report and to add it to the public's observations, where appropriate.

Laurie moved that we schedule 1 public hearing per month beginning in January. These hearings should follow the recommendations of Town Counsel and include hearings:

- **Presenting information the committee has collected and if possible compiled into a draft report**
- **To allow Social Service Agencies an opportunity to speak on their behalf**
- **To allow the public an opportunity to share their views**

Wes was worried that this will just fan the flames. He was also concerned that we have so much work to do, he didn't see the benefit to our work to do this.

Dawn asked if we can postpone this issue, or lay this on the table, until the 10th.

Laurie agreed.

Steve said we should clarify the publication of notice of the meeting.

Jim said that we need to get the total agreement from the committee on scheduling these.

Motion to adjourn

Vote: 7 in favor 1 opposed 0 abstain

Laurie Lee
Clerk

November 16, 2005

Mr. Bob Berman
Chair, PILOT/Impact Committee
Town of Framingham
150 Concord Street
Framingham, MA 01702

Dear Mr. Berman:

This is in response to the questionnaire of the Social Service PILOT and Comparative Impact Study Committee received by NAMI Greater Framingham, Inc. As I explained in telephone conversations with Ms. Cynthia Laurora, NAMI Greater Framingham, Inc. is not a social service agency, and the questions in the survey do not apply to our organization.

NAMI Greater Framingham, Inc. was founded over 25 years ago under our former name, Alliance for the Mentally Ill of Middlesex County, Inc. Family members began meeting to define and advocate for better mental health care for their loved ones living with severe mental illness. Our membership is composed primarily of individuals with psychiatric disorders and members of their families. We have a volunteer Board of Directors representative of our membership. The work of the affiliate is carried out entirely by volunteers—all members of the affiliate. We do not have an office or employees and we do not own any property. Our work is funded by membership dues and donations. Our meetings have been held in various locations, including the Framingham Public Library, Framingham Union Hospital, and area churches. Currently our meetings are held at the First United Methodist Church in Framingham.

NAMI Greater Framingham is a grassroots, non-profit, support, education, and advocacy organization, dedicated to improving the quality of life for persons affected by mental illness. Our major activities include family support groups, family education classes, education meetings on specific topics, support for legislative action on behalf of persons with mental illness, and general fund-raising to support our activities and to benefit programs for individuals with mental illness and their families. We also have a help line for support and information about resources.

NAMI Greater Framingham is an affiliate of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (new name for NAMI). NAMI is a national organization with state and local affiliates. NAMI Massachusetts is located in Woburn, Massachusetts. The area of our affiliate includes the towns of greater Framingham, greater Marlborough, and the Blackstone Valley.

More information about NAMI can be found on the national website, www.nami.org, and on the state website, www.namimass.org. For those seeking current information about the severe mental illnesses, the national NAMI website is an excellent resource. Information and understanding dispel the stigma that some still attach to mental illness. These illnesses occur in all segments of our society. Social status, gender, race, and ethnicity offer no protection against them. The availability of good medical treatment and psychosocial services in a community benefits the whole community.

Sincerely,



Mary Pond, Treasurer

On behalf of the Board of Directors